1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

horizontal ties and this has to be balanced by stressing vertical ties periodically.

In the case of the Brahmin the dishes prepared for offering to the deity also become gifts to people who normally contribute to the upkeep of the temple and its priest. The Brahmin and Poleya, though they stand at either extreme of the social scale, are similar in this, that they are normally receivers of goods at the hands of Coorgs and others. During the festival they make token returns which, while negligible economically, are enough to stress the goodwill prevalent between the various sections of a village community.[1]

The tenth day, the festival day, is the most important day of the festival Visitors come from surrounding villages to witness the ritual that is performed on this day at the temple. A ritual fast is observed till about 10 p.m., and adult villagers subsist till then on pancakes and *pāyasa*.

The morning is devoted to making preparations for the rites in the evening, and for cooking. Some time in the afternoon the villagers go in procession to the Bhadrakāḷi temple. The procession is led by Poleya oracles who walk with their faces to the Bhadrakāḷi oracle and the crowd. Pack-bullocks carrying votive offerings of rice (*ettu pōraṭa*) form part of the procession.

The Poleya oracles stop outside the temple, before the wooden platform on which an image and representations of their deities are placed. The villagers go into the temple driving their pack-bullocks before them and walk round the Bhadrakāḷi shrine thrice. They then dance the torch dance in the temple yard, holding yak-tail whisks or swords in their hands.

Drummers belonging to the Mārāya caste beat big drums called *chaṇḍés* while the Brahmin priests worship Bhadrakāḷi inside the shrine using Sanskrit *mantras*. Devotees, Coorgs as well as others, who pay the requisite fees, can have worship performed by the priest to the deity in their names.

Meanwhile, the Bhadrakāḷi oracle stands behind the shrine and people put questions to him on matters concerning their welfare: one wants to know whether his wife will recover from an illness, another why he has suffered from a series of misfortunes in the last

[1] They are alike in that both are excluded from the activities of the middle castes. Extreme purity excludes the Brahmin while extreme impurity excludes the Untouchable.

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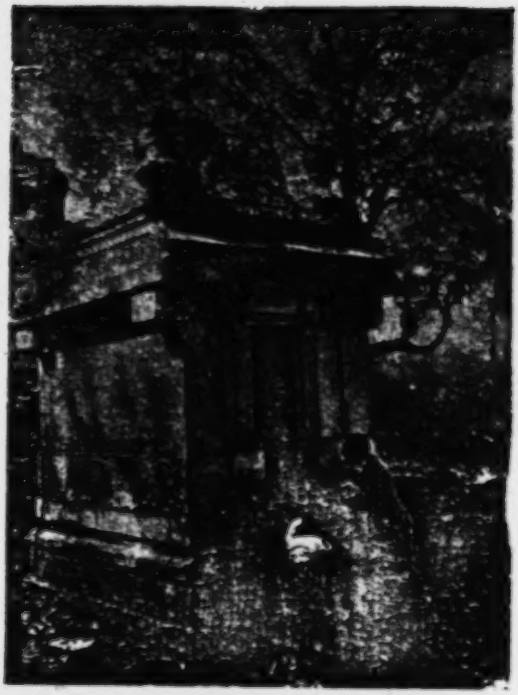

A Coorg Temple (Kaymada)

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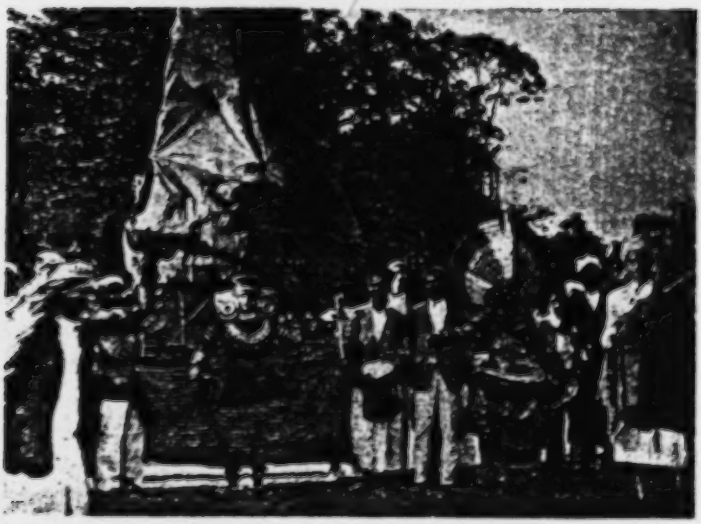

A Ghost Mask (Karnakola)

[facing p. 51]

796 769 787 The Coorgs perform another ceremony called ghost-mask (*karanakola*) with the object of finding out the particular wishes of the ghosts. It is performed every second or third year and occasionally also every year. For this, the services of a Malayali performer, a Panikkan or Benna, are requisitioned. At night he puts on, one after the other, five or more different costumes to represent the number of ancestors especially remembered at the [534] time. Arrayed in these different costumes, he dances to the accompaniment of a drum beaten by his companions and behaves as if he were possessed by [782] the Coorg ghosts. After each kola or mask, he leaves the house with a fowl, a coconut, fried rice and other eatables, and some arrack, and offers them in the courtyard to a particular ghost. Various questions are put to him by the members of the family and by the neighbours while he is in a state of trance. The food given him during the trance is called *Karana Barani*. The masks having been finished, a pin especially fattened for the purpose is decapitated in front of the *Kaimatta* and then taken up to be given to the performer. The rest of the carcase and bodies of the fowls [782] decapitated are taken to the house. In the absence of a *Kaimatta*, the pig offering takes place at the *Karanakotta*. Women also behave likewise, when possessed by an ancestral spirit. While thus affected, they roll on the ground, but they do not give utterance to oracular responses. Some- [785] times sorcerers, Coorgs or aliens, are invited to exorcise the ghosts. With the recitations of certain formulae in loud voice, they resort to flagellation. If it proves ineffectual, offerings are given.

Village Gods

776 782 Tradition has it that human sacrifices were offered in former times to secure the blessings of Grama Devatas, Mariamma, Durga, and Bhadrakali, who are supposed to protect the villages or nads from all evil influences. These deities have their annual feasts among the Coorgs, but they pay special attention to Ajappa, Kaliat Ajappa, and Kuttamma in Kiggatnad, whose shrine is annually visited with gifts.

Every forest ground has its presiding deity to which an annual sacrifice or pork and cakes is offered. If it is not propitiated, the *Kadevaru*, the tending god, will withdraw his favour, and sickness and death among cattle will ensue. Besides, there are extensive forests called Devarukadu, which are untrodden by human foot and reserved for the abodes or hunting grounds of deified heroic ancestors.

Serpent Worship

777 825 Traces of serpent worship or tree worship are found in Coorg. The *Natas* or spots on which cobras have finished their course of terrestrial life are the place of solemn ceremonies. To prevent any human being from setting foot on the hallowed spot, it is marked by a little stone enclosure.

Festivals: (1) Huttari

243 796 527 The Huttari is the feast of first fruits. The name is said to be derived from the Malayalam 'pudiyari', or new rice. It occurs at full moon at the end of November or beginning of December. After various preliminary ceremonies, the person chosen to cut the first sheaves goes at sunset to the fields in procession with a lighted torch in a dish of rice [415] carried before him. He has a sickle in one hand and a bamboo bottle of fresh milk in the other. He cuts the sheaf and distributes the stalk to those present, and puts some into the milk. This is carried in procession to the [534] house, the people shouting, "Poli, poli, Deva", that is, "Increase, increase, O God," followed by a blast of the shrill Coorg brass horn. It is truly a national and thanksgiving feast entirely uninfluenced by Brahmanism. It [535] lasts for seven days. It begins with village rejoicings and extends to Nad [533] or district gatherings, and ends every day with the peculiar cane dance of [526] the men and boys to the tune of the most melancholy and monotonous sound of horns, drums and songs. Other games vary the proceedings, but the most interesting part is always the champion fight in playful dance, which often ends in a general skirmish in which the canes are freely used.

(2) Kaylmurtha

527 The Kaylmurtha is the festival of arms celebrated by the youths and men of Coorg sometime in August. When the hard labours of ploughing, sowing, and transplanting of rice are over, a break in the monsoon spreads its bright light and sunny warmth over the hills and [721] dales, forests and fields in Coorg, when a holiday is most welcome. The Takka of the grama calls some respectable men to accompany him to the astrologer's home. They ascertain the most propitious day for the celebration of the festival.

[410] On the morning of the joyous day, the whole armoury of the house is placed in the verandah, gun and spear, bow and arrow, sword and knife. Some of the young men sit down to burnish the familiar weapons. When this is done, they are carried to a room or central hall, where they are [722] placed in a corner. When the auspicious moment arrives incense is burnt before the weapons, sandal paste is dotted on them in profusion, and a show offering, *Nivedya*, is offered to them and the idols. As soon as the [526] festival is over, the whole house sits down to dinner. The men then proceed with their arms to the village green, *uru-mandu*, to spend the afternoon in shooting at a mark and in athletic sports. The following day is devoted to a hunt in the forest belonging to the village. This is followed by a great hunt of the whole Nadu. It is a repetition of the village hunt [533] on a larger scale. Whatever game is obtained, the man who killed the animal receives a hind quarter and the head. The rest goes to the company. The Kaylmurtha is the most glorious of all festivities to the young Coorgs,

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

it is an unsavoury pet, and its capricious and vindictive temper, when getting old, render it a dangerous playmate for children. 136*

The grey or Hanumán monkey (Semnopithecus entellus, Duff)—*Kg.* Kóde—prefers a more open country and does not shun the neighbourhood of native dwellings, where there are Upali trees of the fruit of which it is very fond. Troops of them may sometimes be seen on an open glade near a large tree, gambolling unmindful of the passing by of a native, but quickly disappearing in the dense foliage on the appearance of a European, chattering all the while with their little ones, whose frightened expression is pitiful, clinging to their sides. This monkey is considerably larger than the former species and has a long tail, which is of service in gymnastic feats on slender branches. Its face is bare and rather reddish. It is more docile than the black monkey, but when big more vindictive and dangerous. A case happened in Mercara, where one of these monkeys attacked a baby in its cradle and might have killed it, but for the timely arrival of the parents.

The brown monkey—*Kg.* Mucha—is only found in the Mále-kádu and eagerly hunted by the Coorgs, who eat its flesh roasted and in curry, and consider it a great delicacy. A soup made of its flesh is given to sick and weakly people. When full grown, this monkey is in a sitting posture about two feet high; it has a long tail, a light grey face and chest. It is never kept as a pet by natives. Of the skin of all the three named species the Coorgs make their tom toms or drums. [224] [262] [237] [534]

A little animal of the Lemur kind is the slender *Loris* (Loris gracilis. Linn). The Coorgs call them Chínge-káli or devils of the Chínge or soapnut shrub which grows all over the central and northern plateau of Coorg. Its silent and slow gait, its thin limbs, its closely set and large protruding eyes and pointed visage are enough to frighten on a sudden en-

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

796 And it appears, that the people can do very well without them.

796 361 Six days before the chief festival of tasting the new rice, all the males from six to sixty years, assemble on one of the Mandus of the Gráma, after sunset. Mandu is the name of the open public place in which business is transacted or festive games carried on. Grámas have generally three Mandus, one called the Panchâyati-mandu for business; a second, Dévara-mandu, on which dances are performed in the name of Bhagavati during the after-Huttari-days; a third, Uru-mandu (i. e. the Mandu of the village) on which the Huttari performances take place.

796 The time of these national games and dances is from sunset till after ten o'clock. The whole male population of the Gráma, except little boys and old men, past sixty, has religiously to attend. The assembly gathers gradually between six and seven o'clock. When the assembly is full, a space is marked out for the performances of the party. At a little [563] distance a band of musicians, two Holeya horn-blowers and two Méda-drummers, sit near a fire, which they have kindled [534] for warming themselves and their instruments. The horns are large and of brass. The drums are a Pare (large drum) and a Kudike-pare (pot-drum of a smaller size).

Three Coorg-men step into the centre of the open space and call aloud three names: Ayappa! Mahádéva! Bhagavati! The men stand in a triangle, their faces towards the centre, their backs towards the company. [796] Ayappa is the Coorg forest-god; Mahádéva, the Shiva of the Hindus, and Bhagavati, his wife.

796 526 The Chandukutti (ball-and-peg-play) now follows. The whole assembly takes part in it, the moon shedding a bright silver-light on the scene. A peg is driven into the centre of the chosen ground. A piece of rope is fastened to it by a loose loop. The people who make this preparation, seize some

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

an armful of rice in the neighbourhood and distributes two or three stalks to every one present. Some stalks are put into the milk-vessel. No one must touch the sheaf-cutter. All return to the threshing floor shouting as they walk on: "Poly, poly, Déva!" (increase, O God!) A bundle of leaves is adorned with a stalk of rice, and fastened to the post in the centre of the threshing floor. The company proceeds to the door of the house, where the mistress meets them, washes the feet of the sheaf-cutter, and presents to him, and after him to all the rest, a brass-vessel, filled with milk, honey and sugar, from which each takes a draught. They move into the kitchen. The Huttari mat is spread, the brass dish, the rice sheaf, and the basket with leaf scrolls, each with a stalk of rice, are placed on it. The young man distributes the bundles to the members of the family, who disperse to bind them to every thing in house and garden, doors, stools, roof, trees, etc. In the mean time he sits down to knead the Huttari dough of rice meal, plantains, milk and honey, seven new rice corns, seven pieces of cocoanut, seven small pebbles, seven pieces of dry ginger, seven cardamom seeds, and seven corns of sesamum are added. Every one receives a little of this dough upon an Ashvatha leaf, and eats it. The ceremony is over, and the sheaf-cutter mixes with the company. Supper follows, consisting of sugared rice and sweet potatoes, into which a handful of new rice is thrown, and of a substantial common repast of rice and curry. The Huttari chants follow now at every house during the night.

But the Coorgs have not yet done altogether, with their pleasant festival. Four after-Huttari-days are added to the holy week. On the eighth day the Urukólu, the village-stick-dance, collects the whole community. The women of two or three houses repair together to the Urumandu, a pair leading and a second pair following, all four beating cymbals and chanting ancient songs or impromptu verses. When

4: Richter M, G-5 (ca. 1856-1870) 1870 AW5 Coorg AW5

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Riding forth the world to conquer,
The commander of her armies
Vanquished all her enemies;
Sitting on the throne of judgment
Executed right and justice.
As you shoot the ruddy umber,
So he slew his adversaries.
When the great and valiant hare
Had destroyed the royal tiger, *
All the flocks lived free and happy.
Fearless all the nations dwell
Near and far in the dominions
Of our gracious Queen and Ruler.
Long live our noble Queen
By the grace of God Almighty
To protect this happy Coorg-land!

The chanting of these songs is very simple and varies only within a range of 3 notes which are intoned with a slow tremulous and rather melancholy utterance, especially when accompanied by the rude native instruments, the monotony of which, however exciting to a crowd, is grievous to a musical ear. The Coorg instruments are: the *Pare* and *Kudikepare*, a large and small wooden drum, the *Dudi*, a metal drum, the *Kombu* or brass horn and the *Tâla* or cymbal.

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It may be expected, that the Coorgs, who are a shrewd and good-humoured people indulge also in racy proverbs, with which they spice their conversations during their idle hours, or when convened in solemn meetings in the Ambala of the village-green. The following are a few specimens:—

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1. Paṭṭama paḍekâge, pirike karikâge
Beppeneke bechaka pirike karikâku
Poppaneke pottaka paṭṭama paḍekâku.

Brahmins are worthless for fighting, the pirike fruit (Colocynth) useless for curry, but if the pirike is properly dressed, it may be

* Tippu Sultan.